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PREFACE

The aim of this study is to present a critical edition of nearly all the extant Sumerian love songs, commonly referred to by Sumerologists as the "Dumuzi-Inanna Songs." These songs describe and celebrate the love, courtship, and "sacred marriage" (hieros gamos) between the Sumerian love and fertility goddess Inanna and her husband, the shepherd-god Dumuzi (Biblical Tammuz). The need for the publication of a comprehensive corpus of these songs was long felt, inasmuch as they constitute an important source for the study of the Sumerian religion and cult, as well as for the study of Sumerian literature. This volume consists of two parts: The first part contains an analytical introduction to the Dumuzi-Inanna songs; the second part consists of the textual editions, translations and commentary of 27 of these songs.

The present study of the Sumerian love songs is based on a dissertation which was written under the supervision of Professors Jacob Klein and Pinhas Artzi, and presented to the Faculty of Jewish Studies of Bar-Ilan University in 1985. The above dissertation already contained an edition of all 27 poems included in this volume. At that time, thirteen of these poems (Dumuzi-Inanna songs B, C, F, L, M, O, R, V, W, Y, Z, E₁, and F₁) were completely new editions; the rest were improved treatments of earlier editions. Since then, I have had the opportunity to collate all the pertinent texts kept in the Istanbul Museum of the Ancient Orient, in the University Museum and in the Yale Babylonian Collection. In the intervening years several studies have appeared in which some of the Dumuzi-Inanna texts treated in my dissertation have been reedited or translated. Thus, in 1985, in a study dealing with Sumerian love songs, B. Alster (RA 79, 127ff.) reedited five Dumuzi-Inanna songs (B, C, O, Y, Z), and two Šusin love songs (ŠS A and ŠS B). In 1987 Th. Jacobsen (Studies Pope, 57ff.) reedited the two songs: Dumuzi-Inanna B and Šusin A; in the same year, there appeared M. Civil’s edition of Dumuzi-Inanna W (Studies Reiner, 37ff.). These recent editions are of significant value and they were of much benefit to us.

I wish to express my gratitude to a number of colleagues and friends for their invaluable aid in the preparation of this study. First and foremost, I am indebted to Professor Jacob Klein who served as a constant source of fresh insights and constructive criticism. Secondly, I
wish to express my gratitude to Professor P. Artzi for his encouragement and interest in my work. Thirdly, I offer my sincere appreciation to Professor Åke Sjöberg, Curator of the tablet collection of the University Museum, Philadelphia, who gave me freely of his invaluable advice and whose kind permission to use his personal library as well as the Sumerian dictionary files have been of inestimable value. Likewise, I wish to express my thanks to Professor Barry Eichler, Professor Erle Leichty and Dr. Steve Tinney, with whom I have had the opportunity to discuss some of the problems posed by this study. I would like to offer my special thanks to the late Dr. Hermann Behrens, who generously provided me with some literary references stored in the computer concordance of the Sumerian Dictionary Project and also offered valuable advice. His untimely death is a great loss to Assyriological scholarship, and his kind demeanor and friendliness will be missed by all who knew him. I would further like to thank Professor William W. Hallo for providing me with a photograph of the unpublished Yale tablet NBC 10923, and for his permission to collate the original and to utilize it in this volume. Thanks are also due to Dr. Bendt Alster who sent me his handcopy of that tablet (published below as pls. V-VI).

Finally, no publication in Sumerian literature would be justified without mention of the great masters of Sumerology, Samuel Noah Kramer and Thorkild Jacobsen, with whom I have had the good fortune to discuss some of the texts included in this volume. Their impressive scholarly contributions and publications on Sumerian literature have greatly advanced our understanding of the Dumuzi-Inanna texts.

*  

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